Paroxysmal extreme pain disorder

Paroxysmal extreme pain disorder is a condition characterized by skin redness and warmth (flushing) and attacks of severe pain in various parts of the body. The area of flushing typically corresponds to the site of the pain. The pain attacks experienced by people with paroxysmal extreme pain disorder usually last seconds to minutes, but in some cases can last hours. These attacks can start as early as infancy. Early in life, the pain is typically concentrated in the lower part of the body, especially around the rectum, and is usually triggered by a bowel movement. Some children may develop constipation, which is thought to be due to fear of triggering a pain attack. Pain attacks in these young children may also be accompanied by seizures, slow heartbeat, or short pauses in breathing (apnea).

As a person with paroxysmal extreme pain disorder ages, the location of pain changes. Pain attacks switch from affecting the lower body to affecting the head and face, especially the eyes and jaw. Triggers of these pain attacks include changes in temperature (such as a cold wind) and emotional distress as well as eating spicy foods and drinking cold drinks.

Paroxysmal extreme pain disorder is considered a form of peripheral neuropathy because it affects the peripheral nervous system, which connects the brain and spinal cord to muscles and to cells that detect sensations such as touch, smell, and pain.

Frequency

Paroxysmal extreme pain disorder is a rare condition; approximately 80 affected individuals have been described in the scientific literature.

Causes

Mutations in the SCN9A gene cause paroxysmal extreme pain disorder. The SCN9A gene provides instructions for making one part (the alpha subunit) of a sodium channel called NaV1.7. Sodium channels transport positively charged sodium atoms (sodium ions) into cells and play a key role in a cell's ability to generate and transmit electrical signals. NaV1.7 sodium channels are found in nerve cells called nociceptors that transmit pain signals to the spinal cord and brain.

The SCN9A gene mutations that cause paroxysmal extreme pain disorder result in NaV1.7 sodium channels that do not close completely when it is turned off, allowing sodium ions to flow abnormally into nociceptors. This increase in sodium ions enhances transmission of pain signals, leading to the pain attacks experienced by people with paroxysmal extreme pain disorder. It is unknown why the pain attacks associated with this condition change location over time or what causes the other features of this condition such as seizures and changes in breathing.
Inheritance Pattern

This condition is inherited in an autosomal dominant pattern, which means one copy of the altered gene in each cell is sufficient to cause the disorder.

Other Names for This Condition

• familial rectal pain
• PEPD
• PEXPD
• submandibular, ocular, and rectal pain with flushing

Diagnosis & Management

Genetic Testing Information

• What is genetic testing?
/primer/testing/genetictesting
• Genetic Testing Registry: Paroxysmal extreme pain disorder

Research Studies from ClinicalTrials.gov

• ClinicalTrials.gov
https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/results?cond=%22paroxysmal+extreme+pain+disorder%22+OR+%22PEPD%22+OR+%22familial+rectal+pain%22

Additional Information & Resources

Health Information from MedlinePlus

• Health Topic: Pain
https://medlineplus.gov/pain.html
• Health Topic: Peripheral Nerve Disorders
https://medlineplus.gov/peripheralnervedisorders.html
• Health Topic: Seizures
https://medlineplus.gov/seizures.html

Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center

• Paroxysmal extreme pain disorder
https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/diseases/12854/paroxysmal-extreme-pain-disorder
Additional NIH Resources

• National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke: Chronic Pain Information Page  
  https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/All-Disorders/Chronic-pain-Information-Page

• National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke: Peripheral Neuropathy Information Page  
  https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/All-Disorders/Peripheral-Neuropathy-Information-Page

Educational Resources

• Johns Hopkins Medicine: Peripheral Neuropathy  
  https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/adult/nervous_system_disorders/peripheral_neuropathy_134,51

• MalaCards: paroxysmal extreme pain disorder  
  https://www.malacards.org/card/paroxysmal_extreme_pain_disorder

• Merck Manual Consumer Version: Nociceptive Pain  
  https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/brain,-spinal-cord,-and-nerve-disorders/pain/nociceptive-pain

• Orphanet: Paroxysmal extreme pain disorder  
  https://www.orpha.net/consor/cgi-bin/OC_Exp.php?Lng=EN&Expert=46348

• Washington University, St. Louis Neuromuscular Disease Center  
  https://neuromuscular.wustl.edu/time/hsn.htm#painparox

Patient Support and Advocacy Resources

• American Chronic Pain Association  
  https://www.theacpa.org/

• The Foundation for Peripheral Neuropathy  
  https://www.foundationforpn.org/

Scientific Articles on PubMed

• PubMed  
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%28%28paroxysmal+extreme+pain+disorder%5BTIAB%5D%29+OR+%28familial+rectal+pain%5BTIAB%5D%29%29+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+human%5Bmh%5D+AND+%22last+1800+days%22%5Bdp%5D

Catalog of Genes and Diseases from OMIM

• PAROXYSMAL EXTREME PAIN DISORDER  
  http://omim.org/entry/167400
Sources for This Summary

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21984269

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22136189
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